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October, 1928 Extension Circular No. 171

Manual and Record Book For Sheep Club Members

A NORTH CAROLINA FARM FLOCK

NORTH CAROLINA STATE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND ENGINEERING
AND
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CO-OPERATING
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A club member selecting sheep as a project will find this work interesting and profitable. The profit however, will be determined by the manner and method used in doing the work. This circular has been prepared to give the club member such information as is necessary for the profitable production of lambs. Let the 4-H Club motto be the standard in this effort. The County Agent and Local Leader will be glad to assist in any way they can. Read all the other good literature available on sheep raising. Visit other sheep club members in the community. Do not give up if the other fellow seems to have the best results because, "It is the fellow that sticks who wins".

L. R. HARRILL,
State Club Leader.

LAMB RAISING BY CLUB MEMBERS

By

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and

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Club members interested in sheep production are compelled to vary their procedure from those interested in Pig or Baby Beef Clubs. Members of these two clubs can carry thru a complete record with only the individual pig or calf to consider. However, the Sheep Club member must necessarily include the ewe in his project since the lamb is not weaned ordinarily until it is ready to be sold on the May or June market.

SELECTING THE EWES

The success of the project depends largely upon the kind of individuals that are selected in the beginning. Sheep having poor conformation, no matter how careful the attention given, will be less profitable and give poorer results than those showing more desirable qualities.

Each club member should start with not less than five ewes. Of course, if his father has sheep or if his brother or sister is a club member he may start with less.

Ewes for the project may be selected at any season of the year, but to select in the summer, just after the lambs are sold, is probably the best time. At this time growers are cutting down their breeding flocks to a desirable size, and the prospective sheep club member will have a wider selection and probably secure a lower cost per animal. Then too, by getting the ewes at this season, the club member will have an opportunity to become familiar with their habits by breeding time.

Ewes two to four years of age that have raised one or more lambs should be selected when possible. Ewes of this age usually make better mothers than yearlings and do not need the careful attention required by older animals. Above all, select healthy, well grown individuals that are free from disease and parasites. Their top and underlines should be straight; their legs comparatively straight and squarely placed; their fleece dense and heavy; and their general appearance denoting ruggedness and constitution. Well-grown ewes of this kind should weigh from 120 to 150 pounds. Careful attention should be taken to avoid "broken mouths" (teeth missing), spoiled udders, weak backs, narrow chests, shallow bodies, or long crooked legs.

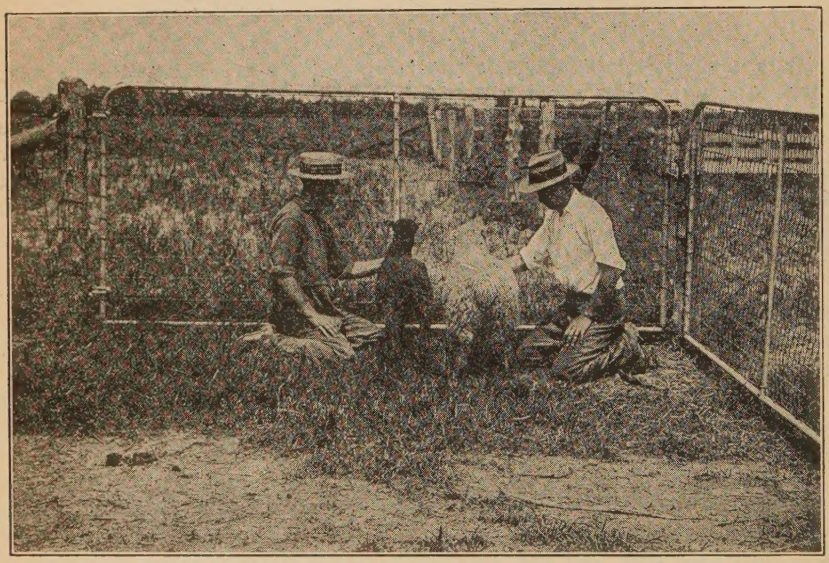
BREED

Ewes from any of the popular mutton breeds will be satisfactory to use, but, unless the club members' parents have a pure bred flock established it will be advisable for the beginner to start with good grade ewes. Later if the work is successful, pure breds may be added gradually.

Select for the head of the flock a pure bred mutton ram representative of the breed most popular in the community. This ram should be well grown, strong, vigorous, and true to type.

Two or more neighboring club members, each with small flocks, may use the same ram by pasturing their ewes together during the breeding season.

The Hampshire and Shropshire are the two most popular breeds in North Carolina but the Dorset and Southdown also are good mutton breeds and are well adapted to the eastern part of the State.



BREEDING IMPROVES QUALITY. The lamb at right is four months old and from the black native ewe and purebred Shropshire ram.

BREEDING TIME

The climate of central and eastern North Carolina is suitable to the production of early lambs. Club members, therefore, should plan to have their lambs dropped in January and February in these sections. Due to a more severe climate in the mountain areas, lambs should come later in the spring. The gestation period for ewes is approximately 148 days, so if lambs are expected in January, the ram should be turned in with the ewes early in August. If February is more desirable for lambing, the ram should be withheld from the rest of the flock until September.

Ewes should be in good thrifty condition and gaining in weight when bred, therefore, two to three weeks before the ram is to be turned in, they should be put on better pasture or given about one-half pound of grain per head daily. This method of getting the ewes in condition for breeding is called "flushing". When ewes are given this treatment they come in heat more uniformly, conception is more likely to take place, and a larger percentage of twins will be born.

It is also very important that the ram be in good thrifty condition at breeding time. As soon as the breeding season is over he should be removed from the flock to avoid late lambs.

CARE OF FLOCK PRIOR TO LAMBING

It will not be necessary, usually to feed the ewes any grain before lambing except in bad weather because of the variety of temporary and permanent pastures available in the State. The stalk and stubble fields, ditch banks and fence rows should also be utilized for grazing during the fall and early winter.

When the weather is severe or if no grazing is available (but grazing should be provided where possible) each ewe should receive about two pounds of good legume hay daily. Oat hay, corn fodder, bright straw, or grass hay may be used in larger quantities if legume hay is unobtainable but timothy hay should not be fed to sheep.

The pregnant ewes should receive a small ration of grain three to four weeks before lambing unless they are very fat. A mixture of one-half pound per head daily of corn and oats, or corn alone, will be satisfactory provided legume hay is fed. Otherwise, the grain ration should contain from 30 to 35 per cent of cottonseed meal or linseed oil meal.

Salt, shade, and plenty of fresh water should be convenient to the flock at all times, but very little shelter will be needed. A shed open to the south and boarded up on the other three sides will furnish sufficient protection.

Exercise is especially important during the gestation period and should be procured thru the judicious use of grazing crops rather than by chasing or exciting the ewes.

CARE DURING LAMBING TIME

The shepherd's harvest is at lambing time and his profits usually are determined by the size and quality of the lamb crop. At this time, the club member should visit his ewes just before going to bed and again the first thing in the morning.

The ewe that is ready to lamb, or just as soon as she has lambed, should be placed, with her lamb, in a lambing pen about four feet square and left there for two or three days. During this time she should receive plenty of fresh water and good hay, preferably bright legume, but should not be fed any grain. From this time begin to feed grain and gradually increase the amount, until the ewe is receiving about one and one-half pounds daily. A satisfactory grain mixture to use during this suckling period, will consist of wheat bran 4 parts, ground corn 2 parts, and cottonseed meal 1 part by weight.

The ewes should be housed in warm, dry, well bedded quarters in bad weather. If the young lamb becomes chilled it should be warmed quickly and given some of its mother's milk. Probably the best way to warm a chilled lamb is to put it into water, as warm as the elbow can bear for a short time, then dry it off and place it before a fire until thoroughly dry.

As soon as the lamb is sufficiently strong, it should be turned out into the sunshine and allowed to graze on a good succulent pasture. The lamb

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Young lamb ailments and difficulties are discussed rather fully in Farmers' Bulletin No. 840.

will soon learn to eat grass and, at the same time, the green feed will stimulate the milk flow and health of the ewe. However, both ewe and lamb should be provided with good shelter during cold, rainy weather.

DOCKING AND CASTRATING

Lambs should be docked when they are from ten days to two weeks old, and all of the ram lambs, that are not pure bred should be castrated. A bright, sunny day should be selected for these operations.

Docking may be done satisfactorily by cutting the tail off about one inch from the body, either with a sharp knife of a hot docking iron.

Castration is rather a simple operation and consists of cutting off the lower one-half of the scrotum and pulling out the testicles with a small pair of pliers or tweezers.

It is imperative that sanitary quarters be furnished for freshly docked and castrated lambs.

FEEDING THE LAMBS

Lambs will begin to nibble at hay and grain when they are about two weeks old and it is usually profitable to provide them with a good grain mixture in a creep from this time until they are ready for market. A good ration for this purpose may be prepared by mixing together equal parts, by weight, of corn, oats and wheat bran.

Every effort should be made to keep the lambs growing from the beginning and they should be allowed all the feed that they will consume, but the trough should be kept clean of all refused feed and trash.

PASTURE

Good pasture is necessary for both the ewes and their lambs since it will increase the milk flow of the ewes and promote vigorous and healthy growth in the lambs. Abruzzi rye and crimson clover, sown together about October 1st, make excellent grazing thruout the late fall and winter months.

A mixture of spring oats and dwarf Essex rape seeded about February 15th will supply succulent and nourishing grazing when the rye has become tough and woody. Red clover is also an excellent grazing crop to use in the spring and provides a fine pasture for the lambs just before they are sent to market.

If a good permanent pasture is available, the flock may be moved directly to it from the rye, but there is less danger from stomach worms if a temporary pasture is used.

SHEARING

Shear the sheep around the last of April or the first of May, depending on the season and locality. Bright warm weather is highly desirable for this operation and the flock should not be exposed to cold rains for several weeks following shearing.

The club member should be particularly cautious to keep his sheep free from burrs, trash and dirt before they are shorn.

A clean, dry shed or barn should be provided for this purpose and unless it has a concrete or board floor that can be swept clean, a canvas

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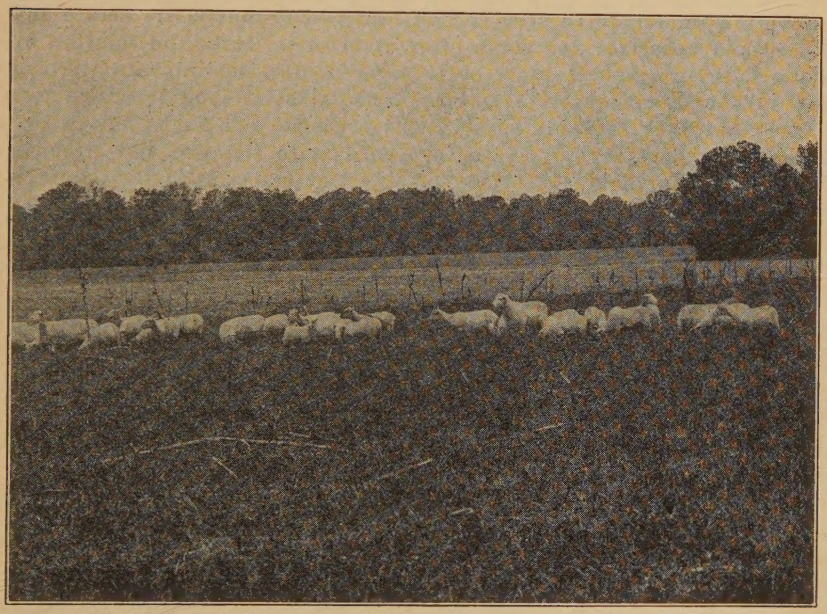
Farmers' Bulletin No. 1134 gives complete directions for performing both of these operations.

cloth should be spread out on the ground to hold the sheep while being sheared.

All dung tags and any dirt or bedding adhering to the fleece should be removed as soon as the fleece is off. Fold the fleece and roll it tightly with the clipped side out and pack in a closely woven bag. Do not use old feed bags as the damage to the wool will be much greater than the saving in bags. Unless the wool is to be sold immediately, store it in a light, cool place where shrinkage will be reduced to a minimum.



SHEEP ON TEMPORARY PASTURE. This Edgecombe farm flock is grazing on temporary pasture of Abruzzi rye and crimson clover.

DIPPING

Ten days to two weeks after shearing, when cuts that may have occurred at that time have healed, the entire flock should be dipped. Usually one dipping is sufficient, but if any ticks, lice or mites are present, the dipping should be repeated ten days later, in order to destroy any parasites that may have hatched from eggs since the first dipping. Select the morning of a warm sunny day for this treatment so that the flock will have an opportunity to dry thoroughly before night. While quite a large number of dips are on the market any of the standard brands will give good results if directions are followed.

Sheep can be dipped easier and better in a dipping vat but if the flock is too small to justify this expense a barrel buried in the ground will serve.

TREATMENT FOR STOMACH WORMS

Drenching for stomach worms should start in North Carolina about June 1st. Usually one or two treatments is sufficient for mature animals

but in case of severe infestation both the lambs and ewes should be drenched every two to four weeks until frost.

The copper sulphate solution is more generally used in this State for the control of stomach worms and full directions are given for its use in Farmers' Bulletin No. 1330.

Nicotine sulphate has also proven valuable, especially when tape worms are present. This treatment should be used according to the following directions:

Keep the animals to be drenched off feed twenty-four hours before and off feed and water for five hours after drenching. Make the solution by mixing together one-half ounce of 40 per cent nicotine sulphate ("Black Leaf 40") and one quart of water. Mature sheep should receive two to three ounces of this solution at each treatment and lambs one to two ounces. The dose should be varied according to the size and strength of the different individuals. Pregnant ewes, or lambs under two months old should not be treated.

MARKETING THE LAMBS

The club member should arrange his breeding and feeding so that his lambs will be ready for market not later than the middle of June, and preferably earlier. Lambs do not gain and thrive so well after hot weather begins, and, too, the price always declines soon after the first of June.

Lambs can be sold profitably in North Carolina when about four months old, at which time they should weigh seventy to ninety pounds. Usually the club lambs can be sold readily on the local market but when this procedure is unprofitable they may be shipped cooperatively. At this time the club member who intends to expand his business should select the best ewe lambs from his flock to be bred when they are yearlings. It is also an ideal time to cull out and mark the undesirable old ewes, although they will probably not be fat enough to market until several months later.

WEANING

Remove all lambs from their dams by the first of July, whether they are to be sold or not. This gives the ewes a needed rest for a month or two before another breeding time and makes it possible for them to be gaining weight when bred.

Place the ewes on scant pasture for a week to ten days after the lambs are removed as an aid in checking the milk flow. They should be examined every two or three days during this time and milked out if necessary. This same attention should be given each ewe when the lambs are sold, provided one of her lambs is not retained in the flock. Put the lambs on the best pasture that is available as soon as they are weaned, preferably using a pasture on which sheep have not been grazed for some time. If the pasture is not especially good, grain should be supplied for at least two to three weeks, but either soy beans or sudan grass will furnish nutritious and succulent grazing throughout the summer.

PREPARING FOR SHOW

Every club member should plan, at some time, to exhibit some of his lambs or sheep. It is an interesting and instructive business and arouses the competitive spirit in a very practical way. If there is no show or fair in the community before the spring lambs are sold, some of the ewe lambs that have been retained for breeding may be shown in the fall. The ram or mature ewes can also be fitted for the fall shows.

Lambs to be exhibited should be selected as long as possible before time for the show. They should be fed and cared for in the best possible manner as usually it is the well conditioned lamb that wins.

TRAINING FOR THE SHOW RING. Time and patience is required in training a lamb for the show ring. However, the well trained animal usually gets the prize.

Training for the show ring is also an important item that requires considerable time and patience, but the well trained animal has a decided advantage when it is placed before the judge. When a sheep is being judged it should stand squarely on all four legs and keep its back and head up. The shepherd should kneel on his left knee on the left side of the sheep, keeping his left hand under the jaw and his right hand free to keep the animal in position.

The appearance of the fleece is also important. All tags or dirty wool around the dock should be trimmed off or washed, and a few days before the show each sheep should be washed thoroughly. After the fleece has dried sufficiently it should be brushed vigorously with a stiff brush and the loose ends clipped off with shears. Repeat the brushing two or three times before going into the show ring.

Profit by what you see and hear, whether you win or lose. Go back home with the determination to put into practice your new knowledge for next year.

COST RECORD

Fill out carefully these two pages. They tell the story of your work and also how much money you have made. When you have completed this record mail it to your Local Leader or County Agent. It will be returned to you after it has been graded.

1. Are your sheep pure bred?_____

2. What breed? _____

3. How many animals did you begin with?_____

4. How many lambs did you raise?_____

5. Total value of ewes when record started_____

6. Total amount of feed_____

7. Number of days fed_____

8. Total cost of feed_____

9. Other costs _____

10. Total cost including (5), (8), and (9)_____

RECORDS—PROFITS

1. Value of ewes when record was completed_____

2. Value of lambs sold_____

3. Value of lambs on hand_____

4. Value of wool _____

5. Premiums won _____

6. Total value _____

7. Total profit _____

To find your total profit subtract No. (10) page 10 from No. (6) above.

PASTE A PICTURE OF YOU AND YOUR SHEEP IN HERE